THE MUSLIM WORLD

VOL. LXXII JANUARY, 1982 No. 1

ISLAM'S ATTITUDE TOWARD JUDAISM*

The oldest part of the message of the Qur'ān needs to be understood first of all against its Meccan background, as a reaction against Meccan pagan idol-worship and the great socio-economic disparity between the mercantile aristocracy of Mecca and a large body of its distressed and disenfranchised population. Both these aspects are so heavily emphasized in the early Meccan suras of the Qur'ān that they must have been organically connected to each other. At this stage, there is no reference to any previous religious figure, nor to any religious community.

Not long after the start of the teaching, however,—particularly after the opposition of the Meccans begins to harden—the Qur'ān begins to refer to earlier messengers or prophets.[1] In S. 87:18-19, the revelations or "scrolls" of Abraham and Moses are mentioned, while in S. 91:11ff. the Arab prophet Ṣāliḥ of the ancient Arab tribe of Thamūd is spoken of. This is evidence of the "compound" prophetology that in all likelihood already existed in Arabia before Islam, integrating ancient Arab and Biblical figures. The Qur'ān, in its references to previous prophets, seeks support from them for its own mission, claiming implicitly that the message brought by Islam is essentially identical with the messages of earlier prophets.

As the argument against the pagans develops, the stories of earlier peoples—which had disobeyed their prophets and were consequently destroyed by God through certain catastrophic natural occurrences—became longer. Since these stories are a vehicle for preaching and teaching lessons, it is not primarily their historical content that is important for the Qur'ān, but the moral point that they are intended to bring home. Thus, the thesis of certain Western scholars that the

*This article is based on a lecture given in the spring of 1981 at the Center for Judaic Studies, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

[1] For the whole question of the Qur'ān's attitude toward Christians and Jews, see my *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), Chapter VIII and Appendix II.

stories became longer because Muḥammad and his followers gradually learned more of the contents of Biblical stories from their "informants" must be wielded with due reservations. It is true that, in a few cases, the factual content of the stories does increase somewhat, but the real reason for the Qur'ān's dilating upon them is a moral one. Indeed, not only are the stories of the Biblical prophets expanded upon but also those of the ancient Arab prophets of ʿĀd and Thamūd, for which one can hardly postulate any Jewish or Christian source. The story of Ṣāliḥ of Thamūd, for example, occupies nineteen verses (141-159) of S. 26 with hardly any increase at all in factual content, while in S. 7:73-79 the only increase in the factual content is the statement that Thamūd came after ʿĀd, something for which pursuing "informants" seems hardly necessary. The truth is that the legends of ʿĀd and Thamūd, together with those of the Biblical prophets, were present in Arabia generally and in and all around Mecca particularly, since unsuccessful attempts at converting Meccans to Judaism and Christianity had been made before Islam. Nevertheless, in the later Meccan period and, of course, in Medina, Muslims learnt a good deal of the Biblical material since Muḥammad was engaged in direct debates with the "people of the Book," particularly Jews.

The essential point in all these stories is the same. There is a people which is "rebellious against God" and "sows corruption on the earth" by committing a variety of misdeeds and moral wrongs. It is challenged and admonished by a prophet on the basis of a message from God. It refuses to respond to the messenger's call, particularly the "big ones" in these communities who also mislead and pressure the "weaker ones" into persistent folly and disobedience. Finally these "criminals" are severely punished by some form of destruction. One can take any of these stories as an example—Noah versus his people, Abraham and Lot versus their peoples, or Moses versus Pharaoh—as the pattern is essentially the same: God destroys those who persist in wrong-doing.

At some point during the second Meccan period (around 614 C.E.), "Moses' Book" becomes very important "as a fore-runner and exemplar of the Qur'ān," mentioned six times in the Meccan period, and with it Moses also gains exceptional prominence, until the very last years of the Meccan period when the image of Abraham is developed as the arch-monotheist overarching all the prophets. It has been pointed out by some Western scholars[2] that the "Book of Moses" in the Qur'ān refers not only to the Old Testament but also to the

[2] Th. Nöldeke and F. Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans* (1909; reprint ed., Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1970), I, 7.

Gospels, the reason being that Oriental Christians always emphasized the Old Testament relative to the New Testament. This thesis may have validity if in Oriental Christianity the figure of Moses had a proportionate prominence, since, as stated above, Moses gained importance during the Meccan period until replaced by Abraham towards the end of that period.

Coupled with this is another important phenomenon. At about the same time (i.e., probably around 614 C.E.), the Qur'ān begins to refer to some people (Jews and/or Christians) as "those who have already been given the Book," or "those whom We have already given the Book" or "People of the Book," or "People with the Admonition."[3] It appears from repeated Qur'ān statements that these people were Jews and/or Christians who had Messianic expectations and who accepted the Qur'ān as genuine revelation and Muḥammad as a true messenger of God and, in fact, encouraged him in his mission. The theory of Richard Bell and his followers that these references are to be exclusively or even primarily located in Medina and not in Mecca and that they must refer to Medinese Jews, cannot be plausibly maintained. In several cases these peoples' acceptance of the Prophetic message is upheld as an argument against the Meccan pagans' rejection of his message. We do not know who these people actually are since history gives us no clue as to their identities. It is certain, however, that they and the Prophet were in touch with each other during his Meccan period and, indeed, fairly early in that period, and that they were a source of support to him.

We have already hinted that the Prophet was convinced of the essential identity of the messages of all prophets. The support of the people or the group referred to above was a further proof that his message was the same as that of Moses and Jesus—and, indeed, as that of all prophets. The source of all these messages is identical: it is called "the Mother of all Books," "the Hidden Book," "the Preserved Tablet." Gabriel, "the Trusted Spirit," is that Agent of Revelation who "descends upon" the hearts of all men commissioned by God and charged with prophethood. He is "the Spirit of Our Command [Logos]" which emanates from that "Hidden Book." Prophethood, indeed, is an indivisible office; one cannot believe in some and not in others without "giving the lie" to the very source of revelation. It is true that all prophets come in the first instance to their own peoples and communicate God's message to them in their own languages; their messages, nevertheless, are universal rather than local. Noah, Abraham,

[3] *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, p. 135.

Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Moses and Jesus are all universal prophets and in the Qur'ān Muḥammad himself is made to declare in a Meccan passage, after speaking of the grave differences among the People of the Book, "Say (O Muḥammad!) I believe in any Book God may have revealed" (S. 42:15).

During his later Meccan years it became apparent to the Prophet that the generality of Jews and Christians would not accept him. They are then called "sectarians" who have cut up the unity of divine religion, each group among them "rejoicing in what it itself possesses" (S. 23:53; 30:32). A little later, in Medina, Jews are told that they, in fact, do not possess the whole of divine guidance but only "a portion of the Book" (S. 3:23; 4:44, 51). This, of course, assumes that each successive revelation consummates the previous ones and hence underlines the absolute necessity of believing in all the prophets and their messages.

Although their revelation is incomplete, both Jews and Christians are recognized by the Qur'ān in the Medinan period as religious communities, rather than being accused of "sectarianism" as had been the case in Mecca. Consequently it demands that Jews implement the Torah in their lives and live by its standards, and so must Christians live by the Injīl. This is certainly done in a concessional mood since these communities would still be living only by "partial divine guidance," and both of them are still invited to Islam. Nevertheless, through this posture, the Qur'ān is able to resolve the Prophet's most agitating theological question since he became aware that Jews and Christians neither recognize him nor each other. This question of the diversity of religious communities, despite one God and one source of revelation, had been often raised in the Qur'ān and each time was shelved with the interim answer that this is a divine mystery whose solution would provoke God's final decision upon this crucial problem in this life, which somehow cannot be made manifest (S. 42:14; 6:35, etc.). But, finally, in S. 5:43ff., after mentioning the Old and the New Testaments and the Qur'anic revelation, the answer to this question is given: Although God's religion is one, the institutionalized expression of this religion varies with different communities "so that God may try you (all) through what he has given you; so compete in goodness" (verse 48).

Yet, this is not the full answer. For, the question of the indivisibility of Prophethood apart, Jews and Christians have adopted certain beliefs, central to their creeds, which cannot simply be overlooked. The most important of these are the Jewish claim to election and equally

exclusivist claims to Truth adopted by Christians. The Qur'anic belief in the universality of divine guidance and the proclamation that God had left no nation or people on earth without sending guidance to them directly ran counter to these claims (for example, S. 35:24). Further, "Neither Jews nor Christians will be happy with you until you follow their religion; say, Guidance is God's guidance" (S. 2:12; see also 2:111). And again, "Jews say, Christians have nothing to stand on and Christians say, Jews have nothing to stand on—while both recite the (same) Book" (S. 2:113). It is true that between Jews and Christians, the Qur'ān prefers the latter: "among them there are priests and monks and they are not a conceited people" (S. 5:82), and "We cast in the hearts of his (Jesus') followers kindness and mercy" (S. 57:27). Nevertheless, Christians' belief in incarnation and Trinity is castigated in the severest terms throughout the Medinan suras.

The ultimate outcome of this line of thought is the eventual religious disassociation of the prophets of these two communities—particularly those of the Jews—from their followers. "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian, but an undeviating monotheist and a *muslim*" (S. 3:67). "They say, 'Become Jews or Christians, you will find right guidance.' Say, 'rather the religion of Abraham, the non-sectarian (non-deviant) monotheist'" (S. 2:140). The entire line of Biblical personages is then claimed for Islam, "Say (O Muslim!), 'We believe in God and in what has been sent down to us (i.e., the Qur'ān), and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses and to Jesus and what was given to the Prophets from their Lord. We set no partition between any of them and we surrender ourselves to God.' If, then, Jews and Christians believe as you believe, they are on the right path, but if they turn their backs, they are in a wide divergence among themselves. . ." (S. 2:136-137).

Islam's attitude toward Jews and Judaism in the religio-theological realm is herewith sufficiently defined. Jews, like Christians, had been recognized as a community, possessing a revealed document and been called "People of the Book." They were asked to live by the Torah. As such, they had religious and cultural autonomy. Yet, the Qur'ān continued to invite them to Islam and also to recognize Jesus as a Prophet since they possessed only "a portion of the Book," i.e., of divine guidance. Thus, at the religious level, the relationship is somewhat ambiguous, although there is no doubt that Jewish religious and cultural autonomy was respected. When we come to the political side of the picture, it is a sad story. The relations of Jews with Muḥammad were not happy even while he was in Mecca, because there

is evidence that Jews of Medina had collaborated with Meccan pagans against the Prophet in supplying the latter with a questionnaire on religious issues to be put to Muḥammad. As is well-known, after Muḥammad's immigration to Medina, some Jews, including some learned ones, became Muslim, but took up an inimical attitude towards the new community. There is no doubt that they collaborated with the "hypocrites," a hard core of Medinan Arabs who, under the leadership of Ibn Ubayy, had outwardly become Muslims but missed no opportunity of sabotaging Islam from within. Soon after his arrival in Medina in 622 C.E., Muḥammad drew up a charter called "The Charter of Medina" which was signed by all the parties in that town, including Jews, and part of which stipulated that in case Medina is attacked from the outside, the whole town shall defend it. On the occasion of three major battles that took place between Muslims and the Meccans, the Jews and the "hypocrites" supported the Meccans, whether actively or passively. The Qur'ān constantly accused Jews of breaking their pacts and violating their promises. Of the three Jewish tribes, one was expelled from Medina after each of the three battles; in fact, the last tribe, that of Banū Quraiẓa, had their adult males ruthlessly massacred at the Muslim's hands, in the year 6 of the Hijra (628 C.E.), immediately following the "Battle of the Trench."

However, for approximately thirteen-and-a-half centuries of the post-Prophetic Islamic history, the relationship between Muslims and Jews has been not only peaceful but, indeed, fruitfully cooperative. Nobody need or will deny that local incidents of disturbances of peace may have occurred between the two communities—indeed, nobody need or will deny that much larger-scale disturbances have occurred within the Muslim Community or, indeed, the Jewish Community. But the historic record of Islam and the international Islamic empires in terms of tolerance and of positive cooperation with other communities in the various fields of science and culture must be regarded as unique. Muslims displayed an international, interracial and interfaith openness and a humanism that is unprecedented. Not that there was no discrimination against Jews and Christians, but there was no large-scale oppression and, positively, there was an active willingness to give and take at the cultural level. Indeed, the weft and warp of Islamic civilization was made up of diverse cultural elements and in its variety and richness has no match in history. It was in Baghdad and Spain that this cooperation was most systematic and creative. The eleventh-century Jewish philosopher and physician of Baghdad, Abu 'l-Barakāt, became Muslim late in life but he had attained both fame and the

highest Court office while he was still a Jew. In Spain, particularly, this cultural cooperation—under Muslim aegis—had the most far-reaching and enduring results. Muslims, Christians, and Jews produced a brilliant multi-national and multi-faith culture which was to contribute so materially to the renaissance of Europe.

It was in Spain that Ibn Gabirol and Moses Maimonides thrived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E. respectively. Both Jewish philosophers wrote their philosophy in Arabic and both influenced not only Jewish thought but also medieval Western Christian philosophy: Maimonides' celebrated work *Guide of the Perplexed* in particular has had an enduring influence on medieval Christian philosophy. He also wrote his commentary on the Mishnah and his commentary on the Book of Commandments in Arabic. He finally settled in Egypt and became the court physician of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin), the famous Muslim adversary of the crusader Richard the Lion-Hearted. Richard even invited Maimonides to come to England but Maimonides declined the invitation—understandably, since there was little in the way of intellectual life in twelfth-century England to attract a man like Maimonides.

It is for these reasons that the Jewish experience in Muslim Spain has been subsequently looked upon by Jews as the "Golden Period" of their history. Indeed, this is why the Jewish Prime Minister of Britain in the nineteenth century, Benjamin Disraeli, looked with such nostalgia upon Jewish history under Muslīm rule, and why politically he sided with the Turks in opposition to Gladstone who supported the Armenian Christian cause. When he writes about the Muslims he uses the first person plural pronoun "we" and "us." For in Spain, after the termination of the Muslim power, the Jew was to witness and experience—like the Muslim—that frenzy of Christian fanaticism, the forcible conversion and the Inquisition. Indeed, the Muslim-Jewish relations were not violently disturbed until the creation of Israel. The entire story since then assumes quite a different complexion.

It should be noted first of all that the troubled relations between Muslims and Jews are at the political level. This was the case at the very beginning of Islam, and this is also true of the situation since the advent of Israel. As is clear from the material discussed in the first section of this article, religious controversies between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Jews of Medina certainly did occur, and Jews (and Christians) were invited to Islam. Yet, this is nothing special vis-à-vis the Jews; Islam invited and invites the whole world. But Jews, along with Christians, were also recognized by the Qurʾān as a valid

religious community with its revealed Book, its beliefs and practices, and its culture. It was, however, the political role of the Jews of Medina and of Khaybar—a role wherein they persistently sided with the opponents of Islam, the Meccans—that led to those hostilities wherein Jewish tribes of Medina and Khaybar suffered exile and some had to die. Otherwise, throughout Islamic history, Muslims have regarded Jews as bearers of a religious tradition, with neither political power nor a peculiar ethnicity or ethnicity-claim. Of the three great Semitic religions, Islam is the least conscious of race and ethnicity, and—as we have seen earlier—the cosmopolitan character of Islamic civilization owes much to this relative lack of ethnicity-consciousness. Hence it is also true that, while the Qur'ān angrily rejects the chosen-race claim of the Jews, historic Islam hardly shows any signs of a consciousness of this Jewish claim to chosenness. Western Christianity on the other hand seems to have been much more aware of it and has partly reacted to it by way of persecution.

Moreover, the Qur'ān affirms time and again that it confirms and completes the earlier revelations—the Old and the New Testaments; in fact, in S. 5:48, referred to above, the Qur'ān calls itself "the protector" of these earlier revelations. After the Prophet's death, it appears that Muslims began to imbibe the Jewish lore on such a large scale that Muslim opinion became sharply divided as to whether or not to cultivate the study of Jewish traditions. There is little doubt that a bulk of the Jewish lore found its way into Islam—particularly in the form of stories assimilated by popular preachers with avidity, stories that also found their way into Qur'ān commentaries. It was against this body of tradition called "Israelism (Isrā'īliyāt)" that a number of putative traditions were started in the name of the Prophet condemning study of the Jewish traditions. The opposite trend is found in the Ḥadīth, namely that the quoting of Jewish traditions is not wrong.[4] Contacts and interaction between Jews and Muslims on the purely religious level—as distinct from the cultural one—were truly quite durable and deep during the early centuries of Islam.

With regard to the current situation, since the creation of Israel, we emphasized already that the tensions are political just as the inimical relations between the Muslims and Jews of the Prophet's days were political. Yet in some respects this analogy between the political role of the Jews of Medina and Khaybar in the Prophet's day and that of the contemporary Jews over Palestine, is not fully accurate. The three Jewish tribes of Medina (of which the pre-Islamic name was Yathrib)

---

[4] Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Karachi, 1965), p. 49.

had been settled there for a long time, probably for centuries. They had kept their religion intact, but in many ways had become Arabized in their general culture and life-style. They wore Arab dress, spoke Arabic and, indeed, some of them wrote exquisite Arabic poetry. It is said that there had been Jewish rule in Medina. Whether this is true or not, it is certain that the Jews, whose main influx occurred after their expulsion from Palestine in 135 C.E., were a dominant factor there. In the long-standing feud between the two numerous and strong Arab tribes, the Aws and the Khazraq, Jews had alliances with both sides. They also had alliances with some influential and powerful families of the tribe of Quraysh in Mecca. Being in every sense of the word an indigenous population, the Jews of Medina played their role against Islam in close liaison with Meccans and Medinan "hypocrites." Those politics proved disastrous for them, but as a segment of the indigenous population they felt entitled to take sides and did not hesitate to do so.

The new Jewish state of Israel, however, is a radically different story. It is not indigenous to the Middle East, but religiously, racially, culturally—and, above all, politically—a foreign element, grafted onto the Middle East as a sheer fiat of political and military power on the part of the West, i.e., Western Europe and the United States of America. Because of the complexity of this situation, any objective analysis and assessment of it requires an inquiry into three distinct, though closely-allied factors: the West, the Zionist movement and the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians who have been the victims of the creation of Israel, i.e., victims of Zionism and the West. In most presentations, this problem is depicted only as an "Arab-Israeli" problem. The West, which actually created the problem, would now like to sit in the chair which "seeks to resolve this problem"—this after the emergence of the oil-power of certain Arab and Muslim states. Indeed, certain West European powers now even claim to be "sympathizers of the Arab cause."

The question of the settlement of Jews had been discussed for quite some time by the political powers of the West and by Jews themselves before the Balfour Declaration. Various locations for the settlement had been suggested including some regions in Africa, but no suggestion ever reached fruition. That many Western Jews should have wanted a territory of their own is understandable in view of their experience in the West, but hardly anyone considered Palestine a valid possibility because Palestine was the land of the Palestinians. It must be fully borne in mind that it was the Western, as distinct from the Oriental, Jew who was interested in settling somewhere. This point is so fundamental that without it no one can understand the nature of the

genesis of Israel. It is true that when this state was created, many Oriental Jews emigrated to it—for example from Yemen—but the point here made is that Yemeni Jews did not agitate or struggle for a homeland of their own. The whole drama of the creation of Israel lies in the West and is to be wholly explained by developments in the West, in the religious-theological sphere as well as in the political arena. With regard to the first, it is to be noted that the softening of the traditional Christian attitude towards Jews is a special case of the general development of liberalism and humanism which expressed itself in the intellectual, social and political fields—indeed, in the whole gamut of thought and life. It must be noted, however, that the effect of this new liberalism and humanism remained within the parameters of the West itself. That is to say, the West had one attitude at home and quite a different one abroad, particularly in the countries they colonized. Thus, the West was democratic at home and imperialistic abroad, egalitarian at home and racist abroad, welfare-minded at home and exploitative abroad. It became progressively secular at home but it forced the Ottomans, for example, to recognize *their* right, i.e., the right of the foreign European powers, to look after the rights of non-Muslim communities living within the Ottoman empire. While within the West itself fruits of the new liberalism slowly but steadily appeared, with regard to the non-Western world the newly-gained "scientific" insights into the nature and characteristics of different races were applied. Religiously-speaking, the new attitude towards the Jews reached its logical end in the fifties when the pope declared them "innocent" of the charge of killing the one and only begotten son of God.

Moreover, a large number of Christians developed an agonizingly guilty conscience with regard to the Jews. The reduction of that guilt became of primary importance: the violation of Arab rights—Arabs being racially inferior with most of them belonging to a religion that is not only heretical but totally uncivilized and barbaric—was of secondary concern. One curious fact about historic (as distinguished from normative) Christian conscience is that while it speaks of love, it must find an enemy at whose expense this love must feed; it fed on Jews (and Muslims, of course) for centuries, but now its newly discovered love for Jews must feed on Arabs; while it must talk of sacrifice for others it must find some other to sacrifice for itself. It seems to work through some psychological law of compensation. But, above all, Christian millenarianism played a role, leading Christians to actively interfere in history out of the conviction that if the prophesy of

the return of Jews to Palestine does not fulfill itself, it must be fulfilled by Christian intervention. The importance of the role of Christian millenarianism in this drama is generally not *duly* recognized.

With regard to the political dimension, distinct but not entirely unrelated factors, needs and drives played a role. During World War I, Britain direly needed funds to continue the war against Germany. Zionist Jews wanted the sale of Palestine in exchange for their financial contributions. Being the greatest imperialist power in those days, Britain managed with some luck to give away a land to which it was not itself entitled when Lord Balfour promised the Zionist Jews a "homeland" in Palestine. In its genesis Israel is, therefore, a colonial phenomenon in the strict sense of the word. No one wants to deny or can forget that Jews have experienced difficult times in the Christian West and have suffered large-scale persecution until relatively recently. But it is equally true that the creation of Israel occurred under conditions which no fair-minded person should ignore, although this is exactly what Israel and her friends are trying to do. The frequent alarms that "Israel is in danger," and that her "right of survival is jeopardized by Palestinian 'terrorists'" are a smoke-screen created for the purpose of hiding the colonial nature of Israel's genesis. The crucial question is whether this kind of deliberately cultivated myopism has any chance of success. That one cannot fool all the people all the time is a true and meaningful adage.

Turning to the situation in the U.S.A. and the issue of American foreign policy in the Middle East, the first observation to be made is that "foreign policy" is in this context a sheer misnomer. American policy in the Middle East has not been a "foreign" policy worthy of the name—it has been a myopic projection of the "home policy" or rather the "home situation." Jewish economic and political influence within the United States as well as Christian feelings of guilt and millenarianism have combined into a powerful and irresistable force to nakedly project this home-situation as "foreign policy." Perhaps the greatest responsibility for the perpetuation of this situation until now is to be borne by the United States public media. In any case, what the United States has done in the Middle East has not lessened but immensely strengthened the imperialist nature of the Israeli phenomenon; there is no other image that Israel has been able to create for herself thus far—in fact, there can be no other image.

Lately, because of the new Arab oil power and its capacity to hurt the United States economically, but also because of the increasing isolation of Israel in the international community, the United States'

official attitude has changed somewhat. The Jewish pressure is relentless, however, particularly upon the United States Congress, and American public opinion remains almost as dismally and dangerously ill-informed and parochial as ever. For a nation that claims to lead the free world, this can spell nothing but disaster. What has to be brought home clearly and unmistakably to all concerned is that the world trend is towards decolonization, not encolonization. This is all the more urgent because of the new role in which the United States has cast itself in the Middle East over the last decade. It has achieved this role by progressively undercutting Russian presence and influence in major—though not all—areas of the Arab Middle East, and has now occupied the judge's chair as well. The famous words of the medieval Arab poet al-Mutanabbī come to mind, addressed to his patron Sayf al-Dawla: "You are the subject of dispute, you are the disputant and you are the judge as well!" It is obviously an extremely delicate and precarious role the U.S.A. is playing and the task has to be carried out with the utmost care and sense of responsibility. For whereas Israel is literally a creature of the West, especially America, Arabs are not, although some of them can be manipulated to a limited extent for some time. The supporters of Israel assume that Israel is rightfully there and that those Arabs and Muslims who even question its right to exist are guilty of inhumanity. For the Arabs and for the entire Muslim world, however, the very basis of Israel is wrong: it was created in sin and aggression, and that origin has determined its character. Those who think that further aggression—Jewish settlements on the territory occupied in 1967, annexation of Jerusalem, bombing of the Iraqi nuclear installation, massacre of innocent people in The Lebanon, etc.—will cause the Arabs and Muslims to forget Israel's genesis, are only deluding themselves. A super-power may be able to crush another government, it has no means to crush a whole people; if Vietnam did not teach this lesson, then the entire sacrifice made there—in terms of precious lives, money, energy, and above all, a humiliating defeat—has been in vain.

There is, of course, an increasing realization on the part of the Western conscience, both Christian and secular, that Arabs have been gravely wronged. A number of Christian-Muslim and Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogues are taking place. The dialogue ideology in itself is a welcome development. It would, however, be immoral and self-defeating if the sponsors and participants of these dialogues would assume that Muslims and Arabs will forget the various forms of oppression committed against them, the main and by far the most

dangerous among them being the issue of Palestine. One must certainly search for a just and humane solution both for millions of Palestinians in exile from their own homes and their lands and for about three million-odd Jews now settled in places vacated by Palestinians. But for the Arabs any solution worthy of the name must take due notice of the aggression inherent in Israel's very being and should attempt to nullify it. Any Westerner who imagines that that aggression can simply be forgotten is still captured by a wishful thinking that is further bolstered by still more dangerous feelings of power. The use of power on the side of aggression never succeeded in bringing about a "solution"; certainly, in modern times it has never succeeded and, indeed, boomerangs with redoubled force.

We said that apart from the thorny and ugly political situation brought about by the creation of Israel, Muslims and Jews have, throughout history been on much better terms with one another than have, say, Christians and Jews or Muslims and Hindus. This is a highly significant and interesting phenomenon which requires further investigation and analysis. It encourages one to think that they should be able to live together in the future not just in peace but in positive cooperation. The solution of the Palestinian problem is, however, an absolute imperative. Religiously speaking, the high place that the Qur'ān accords to the religious personalities of Abraham, Moses and others should provide an adequate basis for mutual understanding and cooperation, even though the Qur'ān rejects Jewish particularism and has universalized monotheism and divine guidance, which every human being can share equally. Such cooperation among the three monotheistic religions the Qur'ān called for fourteen centuries ago when it said, "O People of the Book! Come, let us come together upon a platform (or a formula) that is common between us. . . " (S. 3:64).

University of Chicago FAZLUR RAHMAN